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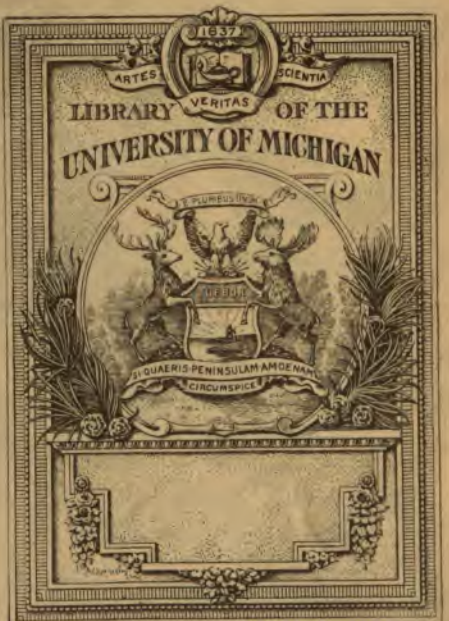
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# CHEAP BOOKS AND GOOD BOOKS

BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS

NEW-YORK
THE AMERICAN COPYRIGHT LEAGUE
1888

*This paper is a revision and amplification of an 'Open Letter' published in 'The Century' for December*, 1887; *and of an address delivered before The Congregational Club of New-York on the evening of February 20th*, 1888, *and published in the 'Christian Union' of March 15th*, 1888.

*B. M.*

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# CHEAP BOOKS AND GOOD BOOKS.

MR. LOWELL has told us that "there is one thing better than a cheap book, and that is a book honestly come by." And Mr. Curtis has put the same thought quite as aptly: "Cheap books are good things, but cheapening the public conscience is a very bad thing." In these sayings, as in a nutshell, we have the ethics of international copyright. But on this side of the question Dr. Van Dyke, with a felicity and a force I cannot hope to rival, has said all that need be said; and I hasten at once to a consideration of the assertion that the effect of the granting of International Copyright will be to raise the price of books.

There are still a few who declare that the People must have cheap books, and that therefore the People will not permit the passage of any bill for International Copyright. Within a few days we have seen declarations like this ascribed to Members of Congress and to Senators of the United States. It is our duty always to acknowledge the

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good faith of our disputant; and we must assume, then, that these Representatives and these Senators are sincere in holding that the absence of International Copyright gives us cheap books in the United States. I am inclined to think that not only the opponents of copyright reform, but even many of its advocates, believe that the existing lawlessness gives us cheaper books than we should have if the rights of foreign authors were legally guarded. It is true, no doubt, that, in consequence of the competing reprints of rival pirates, some few books, mostly in a single department of literature, and generally of inferior literary quality, are to be bought here for very little money. But, with these infrequent exceptions, books are not now cheaper in America because there is free stealing from the foreigner. It may be said, further, that the absence of International Copyright really retards the cheapening of good books in this country.

This may sound like a paradox, but I shall try to prove its exact truth. The books which are made cheaper by piracy are nearly all English novels. The so called libraries — the *Seaside Library*, for instance, the *Franklin Square Library*, and their fellows — contain nearly all the books which are cheap because they are not paid for. I do not mean here to suggest that all the books reprinted in all these libraries are pirated; but piracy is the primary cause of their low prices. These libraries are devoted almost wholly to fiction; by actual count of their catalogues, nine volumes out

of ten are novels. To profit by the provisions of the postal laws, these libraries are registered as periodicals; and they appear at regular intervals, once, twice, and even three times a week. A library which issues but one book a week must publish fifty-two books a year; after allowing for the occasional American book of which the copyright has run out, and for the occasional foreign biography or history which seems popular enough to fit it for the uneducated audience to which these series appeal — after making these allowances, fully forty of the fifty-two annual numbers of any one of these libraries must be English novels. Now, there are not forty novels published in Great Britain in any one year which are worth reprinting in the United States. I do not think there are twenty — I doubt if there are ten. Yet in one of the cheap libraries, issued three times a week, more than a hundred English novels are now published every year.

And this is at a time when there is no great novelists alive in England, and when the English novel is distinctly inferior to the novel of America, of Russia, and of France. But these English novels are almost the only books which are cheapened by piracy. These are the books which the women of America, allured by the premium of cheapness, are now reading almost exclusively, to the neglect of native writers. There is a resulting deterioration of the public taste for good literature; and there is a resulting tendency to the adoption of English social stand-

ards. It is not wholesome, nor a good augury for the future of the American people, that the books easiest to get, and therefore most widely read, should be written wholly by foreigners, and chiefly by Englishmen, who cannot help accepting and describing the surviving results of feudalism and the social inequalities we tried to do away with one hundred and twelve years ago. "Society is a strong solution of books," Dr. Holmes has told us; "it draws the virtue out of what is best worth reading, as hot water draws the strength of tea-leaves." While the privilege of piracy endures, American society is drawing the vice out of what is least worth reading, the machine-made tales of the inferior British novelists of the present day.

Lest this opinion as to the demerits of the mass of the English novels now so freely reprinted here may seem over-severe, attention is drawn to a passage from Mr. Frederic Harrison's incisive essay on the 'Choice of Books' one of the invigorating volumes of essays which England has sent us of late years:—"But assuredly black night will quickly cover the vast bulk of modern fiction—work as perishable as the generations whose idleness it has amused. It belongs not to the great creations of the world. Beside them it is flat and poor. Such facts in human nature as it reveals are trivial and special in themselves, and for the most part abnormal and unwholesome. I stand beside the ceaseless flow of this miscellaneous torrent as one stands watching the turbid rush of the

Thames at London Bridge, wondering whence it all comes, whither it all goes, what can be done with it, and what may be its ultimate function in the order of providence. To a reader who would nourish his taste on the boundless harvests of the poetry of mankind, this sewage outfall of to-day offers as little in creative as in moral value. Lurid and irregular streaks of imagination, extravagance of plot and incident, petty and mean subjects of study, forced and unnatural situations, morbid pathology of crime, dull copying of the dullest commonplace, melodramatic hurly-burly, form the certain evidence of an art that is exhausted, produced by men and women to whom it is become a mere trade, in an age wherein change and excitement have corrupted the power of pure enjoyment."

It may surprise some readers to be told that almost the only books which are cheaper in America owing to the absence of International Copyright are English novels. But that this *is* the fact I have convinced myself by a careful examination of the statistics of the American book-trade. Pirated books are nearly always issued in a series or library; and, as I have said, nine numbers in ten on the list of these libraries are fiction. The tenth number may be Mr. Froude's 'Life of Carlyle,' for instance, or Mr. Justin McCarthy's 'History of Our Own Times,' both of them books worth reading and worth keeping, but in this flimsy form almost impossible either to read or to keep, because of the shabbiness of the type, the press-work, and

the paper. It is not sound economy to spare the pocket and spoil the eyes. It is not sound economy to pay eighty cents for four evil and awkward pamphlets comprising a book which can be bought for a dollar and a half, decently bound and decently printed on decent paper,— a pleasure to read now and a treasure to transmit to those who come after us.

A consideration of the present condition and annual statistics of the American book-trade will show that the legal right to pirate is not now utilized by most American publishers, and that those who are still privateers seek their booty chiefly, if not solely, among books of one exceptional class. From the figures published annually in *The Publishers' Weekly*, the following table has been prepared to show the different kinds of books published in the United States during the past five years. (The classification is not quite that of the *Weekly*, but has been modified slightly by condensation.)

| | 1882 | 1883 | 1884 | 1885 | 1886 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Education and language | 221 | 197 | 227 | 225 | 275 |
| Law | 261 | 397 | 455 | 431 | 469 |
| Science (medical, physical, mathematical, political, and social) | 406 | 407 | 511 | 443 | 499 |
| Theology, religion, mental and moral philosophy | 347 | 390 | 399 | 460 | 395 |
| History | 118 | 119 | 115 | 137 | 182 |
| Literary history and miscellany, biography and memoirs, description and travel, humor and satire | 559 | 521 | 529 | 501 | 719 |
| Poetry and the drama | 182 | 184 | 222 | 171 | 220 |
| Juveniles | 278 | 331 | 358 | 388 | 458 |
| Fiction | 767 | 670 | 943 | 934 | 1080 |
| Et cetera | 333 | 265 | 329 | 330 | 379 |
| Total | 3472 | 3481 | 4088 | 4020 | 4676 |

Taking up these classes in turn, we shall see what will be the effect on each of the passage of the bill of the American Copyright League. On the first class, education and language, there would be no effect at all, as the text-books now used in American schools were written by Americans and are covered by copyright: it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the American school-boy never sees a book of foreign authorship in school-hours; I know that I never did until after I had entered college, and then very infrequently. Fortunately for the future of our country, young Americans are brought up on American books. The foundation of American education is the native Webster's Spelling-book. In some respects the making of school-books is the most important branch of the publishing business, and the passage of the Copyright bill would not influence it in any way; American school-books would be neither dearer nor cheaper.

In the second class, law, are included a tenth of the books published in the United States last year, and from the inexorable circumstances of the case most of these books are of American authorship and are already protected by copyright. All reports and all treatises on practice and on constitutional law, etc., are of necessity national. Now and again an English treatise of marked merit may be edited for the use of American lawyers with references to American cases, but this is infrequent; and not often would the price of any work needed by the American lawyer be increased by the passage of the Copyright bill.

Of books in the third and fourth classes — science and theology — very few indeed are ever pirated. Once in every three or four years there appears in England, or France, or Germany, a book like Canon Farrar's 'Life of Christ,' the American price of which is lowered by rival reprints. A large majority of books of science and theology published in America are written by American authors; and in general the minority by foreign authors are published here by an arrangement with the foreign author tantamount to copyright. Although purely ethical considerations ought to have more weight with readers of books of this class than with those of any other, yet it would be infrequently that the price of any book of this class would be raised by giving to the literary laborer who made it, the right to collect the hire of which he is worthy.

Taken together, the next three classes on the list — history; — literary history and miscellany, biography and memoirs, description and travel, humor and satire; — and poetry and the drama — include nearly all of what used to be called Belles Lettres (except fiction), and they comprise nearly a quarter of the books published in America. In these and in the preceding classes most of the books are of American authorship, and most of those of foreign authorship are published at just the same price as though they were by native writers. It would probably surprise most readers who imagine that the absence of International Copyright gives us many inexpensive histories,

and biographies, and books of travel, and poems, if they were to consider carefully the catalogues of the paper-covered collections which furnish forth our cheap literature. Among the chief of these collections are the *Frankin Square Library* and *Harper's Handy Series.* In 1886 there were issued fifty-four numbers of the *Franklin Square Library,* one of which was by an American. Of the remaining fifty-three, forty-six were fiction, and only seven numbers could be classified as history, biography, travels, or the drama— only seven of these books in one year, and they were less than one-seventh of the books contained in this collection. In the same year there were sixty-two numbers in *Harper's Handy Series.* Deducting four by American authors, we have fifty-eight books issued in cheap form owing to the absence of International Copyright. Of these fifty-eight books fifty-two were fiction, and only six belonged in other branches of Belles Lettres; only six of these books in one year, and they less than one-ninth of the series. In these two cheap collections, then, there were published in 1886 one hundred and eleven books of foreign authorship, and of these all but thirteen were novels or stories. Not one of these thirteen books was a work of the first rank which a man might regret missing. It may as well be admitted frankly that these thirteen books would probably not have been published quite so cheaply had there been International Copyright; but it may be doubted whether, if that were the case, the cause

of literature and education in the United States would have been any the worse.

In the class of books for the young there are possibly more works of foreign authorship sold than in any other class that we have hitherto considered, but in most cases they are not sold at lower prices than American books of the same character. Indeed I question whether many English or French books for the young are sold at all in America. At bottom the American boy is harder to please and more particular than the American woman; he likes his fiction home-made, and he has small stomach for imported stories about the younger son of a duke. He has a wholesomer taste for native work; no English juvenile magazine is sold in the United States, although several American juvenile magazines are sold in Great Britain. We export books for the young, while we import them only to a comparatively slight extent.

I come now to the one class of books the price of which would be increased by the granting of International Copyright. This is the large and important class of fiction. Of course American novels would be no dearer; and probably translations from the French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Russian would not vary greatly in price. But English novels would not be sold for ten or fifteen cents each. We should not see five or ten rival reprints of a single story by the most popular English novelists. There would be but a single edition of the latest novels of the leading British story-tellers,

and this would be offered at whatsoever price the authorized publisher might choose to ask,—sometimes much, generally little. English fiction would no longer cost less than American fiction. The premium of cheapness which now serves to make the American public take imported novels instead of native wares would be removed; and with it would be removed the demoralizing influence on Americans of a constant diet of English fiction. That American men and women should read the best that the better English novelists have to offer us is most desirable; that our laws should encourage the reading of English stories, good and bad together, and the bad, of course, in enormous majority, is obviously improper and unwise.

The evil effect of this unfortunate state of things Mark Twain has most graphically depicted. He asks if it is an advantage to us, the people of the United States, to get all kinds of cheap alien books devoured "in these proportions: an ounce of wholesome literature to a hundred tons of noxious?"

"Is this an advantage to us?" he inquires further; and he answers his own question thus: "It certainly is, if poison is an advantage to a person; or if to teach one thing at the hearth-stone, the political hustings, and in a nation's press, and teach the opposite in the books the nation reads is profitable; or, in other words, if to hold up a national standard for admiration and emulation half of each day, and a foreign standard the other half, is profitable. The most effective way to train an impressible young mind and establish for all time

its standards of fine and vulgar, right and wrong, and good and bad, is through the imagination; and the most insidious manipulator of the imagination is the felicitously written romance. The statistics of any public library will show that of every hundred books read by our people, about seventy are novels—and nine-tenths of them foreign ones. They fill the imagination with an unhealthy fascination for foreign life, with its dukes, and earls, and kings, its fuss and feathers, its graceful immoralities, its sugar-coated injustice and oppressions; and this fascination breeds a more or less pronounced dissatisfaction with our country and form of government, and contempt for our republican commonplaces and simplicities; it also breeds longings for something 'better' which presently crop out in diseased shams and imitations of that ideal foreign life. Hence the dude. Thus we have this curious spectacle: American statesmen glorifying American nationality, teaching it, preaching it, urging it, building it up—with their mouths; and undermining it and pulling it down with their acts. This is to employ an Indian nurse to suckle your child, and expect it not to drink in the Indian nature with the milk. It is to go Christian-missionarying with infidel tracts in your hands. Our average young person reads scarcely anything but novels; the citizenship and morals and predilections of the rising generation of America are largely under training by foreign teachers. This condition of things is what the American statesmen think it

wise to protect and preserve — by refusing International Copyright, which would bring the national teacher to the front and push the foreign teacher to the rear. We do get cheap books through the absence of International Copyright; and any who will consider the matter thoughtfully will arrive at the conclusion that these cheap books are the costliest purchase that ever a nation made."

International Copyright will perhaps increase the cost of such English novels which may be written in the future; but it is not retroactive; it cannot affect the past; it will not alter the price of Shakspere or of Scott, of Macaulay or of Thackeray. It will not make any American author ask more for his book, if, indeed, by expanding his market, it does not tempt him to lower his terms, seeking a wider sale and a smaller profit. Emerson and Irving, Longfellow and Hawthorne, will be as easily accessible hereafter as they are to-day. The books which are cheap now will always be cheap; and with the removal of the sickly flood of stolen English fiction there will come an opportunity for the American publisher to issue good books at low prices.

Here we come to the special point of this paper: the cheapest books to be bought to-day in the United States are mostly inferior stories by contemporary English novelists, while the cheapest books to be bought to-day in England, in France, and in Germany are the best books by the best

authors of all times. Those who declaim against International Copyright because they do not wish to deprive the poor boy of the cheap book he may study by the firelight after his hard day's work, would perhaps be surprised to be told that of the "Hundred Best Books" (of which we lately had so many lists), of the books best fitted to form character and to make a man, very few indeed, not more than half a dozen, are to be found in any of the cheap libraries which flourish because of the absence of copyright. Most of these great works are old and consecrated by time; they are nearly all free to be printed by whoso will. In Sir John Lubbock's original list of a hundred best authors only two were American, and only twelve were recent Englishmen whose works are still protected by English copyright. Eighty-six out of the hundred were classics of ancient and modern literature — Greek and Latin, Italian and French, German and English.

Now, in Germany, in France, and in England, there have been many efforts of late years to supply very cheap editions of these classics at a price within the means of the poorest student. In the United States no such effort has been made; nor is it likely to be made as long as the market for cheap books is supplied by inferior foreign fiction, which not only usurps the place of better literature, but spoils the appetite for it. The cheap books to be bought in England, in France, and in Germany are stimulant and invigorating, mentally and morally; a man is better for reading then; he

is richer and stronger, and more fit for the struggle of life. The cheap books to be bought in the United States are only too often the trivial trash of the ladies who call themselves "Ouida" and "The Duchess." How much these may nerve a man or a woman for the realities of existence, how much the wisdom to be got from them may arm us for the stern battle of life, I cannot say.

A consideration of the conditions of book-publishing in Great Britain, in France, and in the German Empire is not without interest in itself; and it may serve further to show that Americans do not enjoy a monopoly of cheap books.

The British are book-borrowers, and not book-buyers; they are accustomed to hire their freshest reading matter from the circulating library. I remember hearing Professor Sylvester, the eminent English mathematician, who was until recently a member of the faculty of Johns Hopkins University—I remember hearing him express the surprise he felt on his first arrival in this country, when he was staying with Professor Pearce in Cambridge, and when he heard two of the ladies of the family remark that they had just been in to Boston to buy a book. "To *buy* a book?" repeated Professor Sylvester; "why, in England nobody buys a book!" Perhaps this is an overstatement of the case; but it is true that the British book-trade is in an unhealthy condition, and that the publishers and the public are at opposite sides of a vicious circle—the people refuse to purchase because new books

are dear, and the publishers ask a high price because there are but few buyers.

In England a novel, for instance, is generally published in three volumes at half a guinea a volume — say seven dollars and a half for a single story. At this prohibitive price the publisher can hope for no private purchaser, and he relies wholly on the demand from the circulating libraries, which have to meet the wishes of their subscribers, and to which volumes are sold at a heavy discount. Not only novels, but travels, histories, and biographies are usually brought out in England at absurdly exaggerated prices. If the book succeed, if it be really deserving of a wider sale, popular editions at lower figures soon follow. It is only the first editions, intended solely for the circulating libraries, which are disproportionately dear. Six months or a year after a novel first appears in three volumes, it will probably be republished in a single volume at a price varying from three shillings and sixpence to six shillings — say, ninety cents to a dollar and a half. Often it also appears a little later in a railway edition at two shillings — fifty cents. The reduction in the price of histories and biographies is not so large; but second-hand copies in excellent condition can be had at a tithe of the original cost from the circulating libraries, which sell off their surplus stock as soon as the pressure of the first demand is relieved.

This system of publishing seems cumbrous and top-heavy. It is peculiar to Great Britain. It has never been adopted by any other nation. It could

exist only in an island, or in a country with a compact population having both leisure and means. But apparently it is not altogether unsatisfactory to the English, and it does not make books as dear as at first glance we might suppose. The brand-new book, smoking-hot from the press, is intended to be borrowed and not bought; but commonly, after a year or two, it can be had at a moderate price. Professor Lounsbury, of the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale, after an experience of many years, has recorded it as his deliberate opinion that, in the long run, English books are cheaper than American books.

Of late there have been many efforts made in England to create and to satisfy a popular desire for good books at low prices. There are even signs that the circulating library system is not as secure as it has seemed, and that the British may become book-buyers instead of book-borrowers. A Bristol publisher having sold several hundred thousand copies of the late Hugh Conway's 'Called Back' at a shilling (twenty-five cents), has continued the series with original stories by Mr. Wilkie Collins, Mr. Walter Besant, Mr. Andrew Lang, and others. All of Disraeli's novels are now for sale at a shilling each; and all of Thackeray's writings are being re-issued at a shilling a volume by his own publishers, who still own the copyrights. A complete edition of Carlyle's works has just been begun, to be sold at the same low price — twenty-five cents. And it is to be noted that these sets of Thackeray and Carlyle are not ill-made and

flimsy pamphlets, badly printed with worn type on poor paper; they are honest books, firmly printed on good paper and substantially bound in cloth.

Mr. John Morley's admirable series of *English Men of Letters* is now in course of republication at a shilling for each biography. And a shilling is the price asked for each of the well made, neatly bound, and carefully prefaced volumes of Professor Henry Morley's *Universal Library*, which is intended to contain the masterpieces of the master minds of all countries and all ages. In this most excellently edited series there have already appeared, month by month, the chief works of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Machiavelli, Rabelais, Bacon, Ben Jonson, Cervantes, Molière, De Foe, Locke, Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Goethe, and Coleridge. Professor Henry Morley is also the editor of another series, perhaps even more important, because the price is lower and the issue more frequent. This is Cassell's *National Library*, in weekly volumes at threepence each. For six cents a week a man may buy a solid little tome of about two hundred pages containing Franklin's *Autobiography*, Walton's *Complete Angler*, Byron's *Childe Harold*, and the like. Nothing at once as cheap in price and as good in quality as this *National Library* has ever been brought out in America.

Crossing the Channel to France, we find the conditions of publishing very different and far more healthy. There was a time once when books in France were expensive, and when authors and publishers alike were content with a small sale and an

apparently large profit. The late Michel-Lévy believed that "cheap books are a necessity, and a necessity which need bring, moreover, no loss to either authors or publishers."* He converted certain of the leading French writers to his views, and he revolutionized the methods of French publishing. The theory of Michel-Lévy that the low price of one book will tempt the reader and create a desire for another book was solidly sustained by the result of his experiment. Thanks to him and to those who followed his example, France is now the country where books are the cheapest and where authors are the best paid. Dignified historical works generally appear in portly tomes at seven francs and a half each — say, a dollar and a half (the price in America for a volume of the same importance would probably vary from two dollars and a half to five dollars). These volumes at seven francs and a half each are relatively few, as the enormous majority of French books, poems, novels, biographies, essays, and so forth, are of the size called the *format Charpentier*, and are sold for three francs and a half each,— say, seventy cents.

Cheap as these French books are when new, they are often made even cheaper still as their popularity broadens. In imitation of the Michel-Levy Collection, many publishers have series which they sell for one franc a volume—twenty cents—for a seemly and shapely tome containing a complete copyright

* An account of Michel-Lévy's reform may be found in Mr. Matthew Arnold's acute paper on 'Copyright' in his volume of 'Irish Essays.'

book, by an author of wide repute. Even lower priced, however, is a later series, the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, founded twenty-five years ago, now extending to several hundred numbers, and containing not only the French classics but also translations of nearly all the classics of other literatures. The tidy little tomes of this series are sold in stitched paper covers at twenty-five centimes each —five cents—and in cloth bindings for nine cents each. Inexpensive as is this *Bibliothèque Nationale*, it has now a new rival—the *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Populaire*—in which the single numbers are sold for two cents each. I believe that nothing cheaper than this has ever been attempted anywhere. Besides the consecrated masterpieces of literature, the books of an impregnable reputation, which ought to furnish forth the bulk of any collection making an appeal to the very widest circle of readers, the conductor of the *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Populaire* is wisely selecting translations into French of the best books of contemporary authors of other nations. Thus can a pleased American discover on the catalogue the names of Poe, Irving, Longfellow, and Mr. Bret Harte; whether these authors are as pleased to see their works taken without money and without price is another question!

Turning from France to Germany, we find no great difference in the conditions of publishing, although the Germans cannot make their new books quite as cheap as can the French, since their market is not so large. German books, in the de-

partment which at college we used to call Belles Lettres, must be consumed in the home market; there is no fierce demand for export. But French fiction and French criticism are interesting and entertaining throughout the world. A German novel must rely for its readers on the Fatherland and on those who speak the mother-tongue; while French is still the language of courts and of culture, and a French novel may be read with as much avidity in Berlin and Vienna, in London and New-York, as in Paris itself.

Whatever may be the price of the new novel in Germany, and however insufficient may be its sale, the Germans are not behind the French in their cheap editions of the great books of the world. The successors of the house which issued Goethe's writings now publish the *Cotta'sche Bibliothek der Weltliteratur*, in which the works of Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Shakspere, Molière, Calderon, Dante, and their fellows appear in solid volumes, substantially bound, and sold at one mark each,— twenty-five cents. One mark is also the price asked for any volume of *Das Wissen der Gegenwart*, a collection of new books, expressly prepared, well printed, well bound, and most elaborately illustrated. The volumes of this series are written by experts, and they are intended to form a sort of cyclopedia of the results of the latest researches in science and history.

Nor are the Germans lacking in a library of the ancient and modern classics at a still lower price. I believe that it was Herr Reclam's *Universal Bib-*

*liothek* which suggested the French *Bibliothèque Nationale* and the English *National Library.* The single numbers of this series cost each twenty pfennige—say, five cents; and at this price may be had all the German classics, as well as translations of the best writings in other languages. Alongside the works of Schiller and Sophocles, of Shakspere and Sheridan, the American finds translations of Cooper, Longfellow, Mark Twain, Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Aldrich, and Mr. Bret Harte;—of course we cannot expect Germany to protect the rights of American authors until America protects the rights of German authors. The success of this cheap series has brought out a rival still cheaper—*Meyer's Volksbücher* at ten pfennige a volume,—say, two cents and a half for a complete copy of a masterpiece.

In this survey of the conditions of publishing in England, France, and Germany, I have sought to show that what might seem, at first sight, to be a paradox, is only the exact truth. In America the cheapest books are not good books, for the most part; certainly they are not the best books. *In Europe the best books are the cheapest.* That this unfortunate state of affairs in this country is the result of the absence of International Copyright, and the inevitable instability of the book trade, I maintain; and I assert also that the consequences of the present unhealthy condition are injurious to the character of the American people. We now enjoy the privilege of piracy, as the dwellers on a rocky islet used to enjoy the privilege of

wrecking—and we avail ourselves of this privilege only to the perdition of our own souls. We encourage bad books and we discourage good books. And to discourage or injure or retard a good book, as it goes on its mission of making the world better, is to do an evil deed. No one has more nobly spoken of the crime of book-murder than John Milton, and with a quotation from him I may fitly conclude:

"For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve, as in a vial, the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively and as vigorously productive as those fabulous dragon's teeth: and being sown up and down may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book. Who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."

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